1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

yards west of the site of the present village. A big stone called *Musoa banui* marks the place.

When the cutting is finished, the skin is first washed, then lime is rubbed in. *Tanek* (betel-pepper) is chewed and spat upon the place. Then a dry coco-nut is scraped, and a pinch of the scraped meat is taken between the finger and thumb of the operator and dabbed on to the sores. This is to make the scab of the sore come off so that it will not fester underneath. If the sore becomes septic, coco-nut oil is rubbed into it, and pith from the stem of the plant *rurupari*. If the cuts are made too deep, they 'break open the belly' and the child dies. The names of two Kurtatchi children who had died in this way were given to me.

When one child is finished, the man who has held his head takes him on his shoulder and goes round and round while all the women *kōma* and the slit-gong is beaten. The child is then taken into the house and another brought out.

After all the children have been cut there is a small feast. One pig is set aside for it, and the women prepare taro. The food is distributed among those present; they all eat; then the platform is taken up by the men and brought into the hut.

After the operation is finished, the children must stop inside the house for ten days, only coming out to relieve themselves. The girls must put on their hoods whenever they come out for this purpose. If they do not, or if children of either sex walk about too much, white ants will get into the sores and make them very painful. A girl who is cut about the thighs is so sore that she cannot bear to wear a loin-cloth, but goes naked.

As a rule, several children are cut at one time, both boys and girls. Naniu, Tapē, Bori, Puta, and Tawar were all cut together. This indicates that the ages vary considerably, since Maniu and Tawar are now, I estimate, about 9 or 10, Bori about 19, and Tapē and Puta somewhat older then Bori. It is best to have the operation done when the child is young. Some are cut much later and are sometimes made very ill by it.

The effect of the operation can be seen from the photographs (Pls. 69, 70). Not infrequently the wounds become septic and heal badly, with results which we should think very disfiguring, but which do not seem to be so considered by the natives, though they are not admired as much as well-marked patterns. By no means extreme cases of badly healed cicatrization are shown in Pl. 71.

5: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930)1935
ON6 Buka ON6

against him. But, as will be seen, there are certain conditions for which what we might term natural causes are regarded as sufficient explanation. In either case, whatever is done to combat the disease is looked upon as entirely comparable to the procedure employed to ensure success in procuring food or in making love. Any substance—usually, but not always, some portion of a plant—employed in either connexion is known as *ăto*, which, in accordance with what I believe to be the native point of view, I have uniformly translated "medicine." Anyone who knows the appropriate medicine may treat a patient. The "prescriptions" are usually learned from a near relative: father, mother or mother's brother. This knowledge is not necessarily, though it may be, possessed by individuals who are skilled in "making medicine" for other purposes.

Fractures and Sprains

A sprain or a strained muscle is described by the same term as a fracture (*takok* = broken). I met one man (at Petats, an islet off the west coast of Buka) and three women (at Kurtatchi) who were known for their skill in such cases. They treated patients of both sexes, except persons to whom they stood in certain taboo relationships which prohibited physical contact. The following procedure is typical:

Ketar, a young woman, strained her shoulder by carrying too heavy a load of taro. I watched her being treated by Pari, an elderly woman, who subsequently gave me details of the secret mixture she used, asking me not to tell any of the other natives. This mixture (*rŏm*) consisted of the pulped roots of a plant called *tengnamani* (*Justicia* sp.) mixed with a quantity of *oin* (a red powder, a variety of iron oxide, much used in this region for various magical purposes) and stirred into sea water. Pari has taught the secret to her sister's son, together with the method of using the mixture. At Tabut the root of *mamŏmŏ* (*Erythrina*, the "coral tree") is used in the same manner. When it was ready she took up her lime pot and, putting it close to her mouth, called softly, many times, "Pispoa, Pispoa, Pispoa." Pispoa is the name of the spirit of a man who, when he was alive, was successful with this treatment. Pispoa then came and

5: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930)1935
ON6 Buka ON6

752 stayed inside the lime pot, making the lime powerful. Pari mixed some of this lime with the *rŏm* she had previously prepared. Taking some of this mixture in her hands, she massaged Ketar's side and shoulder, keeping her fingers spread wide apart and applying considerable pressure, with their tips, in a grasping movement, her wrist pressed against the patient's skin. She also manipulated the left breast with both hands. Ketar groaned frequently. Then Pari took a piece of flexible cane painted black on one side, passed it across her palm containing the *rŏm* mixture, smearing the unpainted side, and gave it to Ketar, who tied it tightly round her chest, just below her breasts, smeared side inwards. Then she got up from the verandah on which she had been lying and walked with some difficulty over to her own hut.

A young man came to me one day with a piece of cane tied very tightly round his chest, just below the armpits. He said he had "broken here" (putting his finger just below his left clavicle) while carrying heavy loads from his hut in the old village to the new one. He was being treated by another woman. She massaged him with powdered lime only, calling on several *urar* (spirits of the dead) as she worked. The words used were: "*Sawē, Malia, Kerep* (names of *urar*), *tar no ma pa* (look at) *takok* (broken (bone, limb, etc.)) *nen wasum ia* (and fasten it)." Massage was continued for several days, during which time he continued to wear the piece of cane tied round his chest. He then said he was all right again.

A dislocated joint (*tapatsik*) is reduced by manipulation.

Skin Diseases

164 That there is a great deal of skin disease among these people is obvious upon the most casual inspection. There was hardly a native in the village of Kurtatchi who was not affected in some form or other. Several varieties are distinguished by native names and are differently treated.

164 757 Yaws (*Framboesia tropica*, native name *pukpuk*). Every child, without exception, suffers from yaws during infancy. It occurs generally during the second year and lasts for several months, during which the child becomes very emaciated, but

5: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930)1935
ON6 Buka ON6

757 almost entirely covered by them. It is disliked and several methods of treating it are practised. The usual method is to
[278] boil certain leaves, among them *kokui* (*Eragrostis tenella*) and *rarakot* (*Desmodium adhaerens*), to which must be added some bark and some scraped coconut meat; the resulting mash must be eaten by the patient, who then rubs his hand, greasy from carrying the mixture to his mouth, over the sores.

●752 Ulcers and septic sores (generic word *pi*) are very common.
278 The smallest lesion of the skin is almost certain to become in-
[164] fected. They say that the sap of *wirtsun* (the inedible bush banana), if rubbed in at once, will prevent a cut from becoming a sore, but if the cut is deep this is not done, because it is too painful! The most general form of treatment is to chew the leaves or root of certain plants with the betel-mixture (areca-nut, lime and betel-pepper, as chewed for pleasure) and spit the resulting mash on to the sore. Among the medicines used in this manner are the root of *takuruts*, a species of Croton (*Codiaeum variegatum*), and the root of *tui* (*Calophyllum* sp.). Sometimes heated leaves, sprinkled with lime, are rubbed over the sore, or their sap is squeezed on to it. The bundle of leaves must then be put up in the rafters. As it dries in the smoke of the fire below, the sore will dry up; if it is thrown away before healing is complete, the sore will break out again. Of several plants thus used, only one is identifiable, *sipsip* (*Pteris ensiformis Burm.*). The bark of the Indian almond (*Terminalia catappa*), stated by Dymock (p. 262) to possess astringent qualities, may be pounded in sea water and squeezed on to the sore. The sap from the leaves of *wuruts*, the native tobacco plant, is sometimes squeezed over a sore to keep the flies away from it.

Boils (*tsub*, *patsuk*) are supposed to be caused by the blood stopping in the skin. They are treated by applying hot leaves, by pressure, and by spitting over the affected area a mash made by chewing portions of various plants with the betel-mixture.
[171] Among the plants thus used are *towano* (*Achryanthes aspera*), which is used in Australia (Maiden, p. 150) and in India (Dymock, p. 538) for treating cutaneous diseases, and *mansisian*, a species of betel-pepper. The leaves of betel-pepper are used in India "as a ready dressing for foul ulcers, which seem to im-

5: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930)1935
ON6 Buka ON6

prove under them" (Dymock, p. 600, quoting from Dutt's *Hindu Materia Medica*). 752 278

For burns, the leaves of *rakot* (*Oldenlandia paniculata*) are squeezed between the hands and the juice allowed to drop on to the burnt skin. The burn may also be painted with *oin*, and I have seen sea water poured over it.

Warts (*pisis*) are attributed to the fact that one of the food taboos has been broken. A small boy who was badly affected was said to have brought them on himself by eating sugar-cane, which is taboo to little children. Nothing is done for them. 753

Two prescriptions in my list apply to spear or arrow wounds. The bruised leaves of *wiakun* (*Wedelia biflora*) are heated, and the sap squeezed on to the wound "to make it heal quickly." If the head of the arrow remains embedded, the roots of *pupuna* (*Dryopteris Milneana* or *truncata*) are chewed with the betel-mixture and the saliva spat on to the wound. They say that this makes the arrow-head go further in so that the wound will heal over it, that its presence does no harm, and that healing is painless. 752 273

Affections of the Internal Organs

Next to those dealing with skin diseases, the largest number of prescriptions in my collection concerns various conditions which appear to be disturbances of the digestive system, though the descriptions are often so vague that it is difficult to be sure exactly what is meant. 757

"If a person has eaten something bad" he is given the scraped root of *makop* chewed with the betel-mixture. Swallowing this is said to induce vomiting. An emetic prepared in the same manner from the root of *wamut* is given for stomach-ache. Unfortunately, neither of these trees could be identified, but I have included them as evidence that the use of the emetic is known to these natives.

Indigestion is attributed to eating too much or unsuitable food. Certain articles of food are avoided by some individuals for this reason, even, occasionally, their greatest delicacy, pig's fat. A pain "running from side to side" is said to be caused by eating hot taro at the same time as cold taro. Often no treatment is [753]

5: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930)1935
ON6 Buka ON6

752 278 For an insect in the ear the root and stem-sheath of *gartan* (*Calamus* sp.) are chewed with *wiwi*, a small variety of areca-nut, and *tsutsun*, the leaf of a wild pepper. The mixture is made into a bundle, wrapped up in *gartan* leaves and pushed into the ear, and is supposed to make the insect come out. The prescription ends: "Then you must catch it and show it to everybody."

Toothache

757 [W] The roots of certain plants (unidentified) are chewed with the betel-mixture and the resulting mash is pressed against the aching tooth. These people seem to suffer a good deal from toothache, and many, even when quite young, lose teeth through disease.

Throat Troubles

757 278 For sore throat, the root of *wanis* (*Paspalum conjugatum*) is chewed with the betel-mixture and the mash given to the patient to swallow, or the leaf of *obōb* (Hibiscus) may be steeped in water to make a drink. For external use, the leaves of *tengnamani* (*Justicia* sp.) are made into a bundle, heated, and soaked in water. The patient drinks the water and the hot, wet leaves are rubbed on his throat.

If an object, such as a fish-bone, sticks in the throat, it is pushed down by massaging the outside of the throat with a mash made by chewing scrapings from the root of *karawinoa* (*Eranthemum whartonianum*). To ease the soreness, the patient swallows a lump of the already chewed mash.

For a cough, the patient is given a drink made by soaking in water the bruised leaves of any one of a number of different plants. The only identifiable specimen is Hibiscus, the leaves of which are mucilaginous (Maiden, p. 132), so the decoction may actually have a soothing effect.

Swellings

For a swelling behind the ear, take the leaves of *drangi*, hold them in the smoke, then press them hard against the swollen part. This will cause the swelling to go down. To send it to another person, get more leaves of the same plant and throw them in his direction: the swelling will go to him and you will be free from it.

5: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930)1935
ON6 Buka ON6

The medicine used generally consists
751 of a mixture of dried leaves, roots, etc. with the red powder
278 called *oin* (iron oxide). Packages of this " medicine " are highly valued; not infrequently they have been obtained from the natives of another district and their owners are ignorant of the ingredients used. One such, in my collection, is intended to be rubbed over a person's eyes when he has to walk about at night; this is thought to prevent the *urar* from giving you the disease. Another method is to make a drink from the leaves of *gagē* (*Dryopteris pteroidea*); this must be used frequently throughout the time of sickness.

Convalescence

758 When a person is recovering after an illness, and is very thin
278 and wasted, the leaves of *bubus*, squeezed into water to make a drink, are given to help him to "get fat quickly." There are also special leaves to be dipped in water and used to rub him down.

Miscellaneous

752 For the bite of a centipede, chew the root of *wapindi* (a tree)
278 and with your mouth full bite at the place. Sprinkle lime on the leaves and press them on the joints at either side of the bite (*e.g.* if bitten on the forearm, press on the elbow and wrist). For the wound made by a sting-ray, rub the leaves on the place.

751 To prevent sunstroke, while working in the taro garden, take
[824] the leaves of *iag* (*Coleus Blumei var.*), put them in half a coconut shell, fill it with water, and leave it lying in the sun. When you have finished working you must pour the contents of the coconut shell into the fire. To leave it where it is, or to empty it on the ground, will cause rain.

Summary

757 It will be seen that the natives of north Bougainville practise a variety of curative methods, their technique including the giving of medicine by the mouth; its application externally as we use ointment; the use of a suppository; the use of emetics; the application of counter-irritants: the application of heat in a form comparable to our poultice, and also of smoke; inhaling steam; sniffing aromatic plants; massage, manipulation and pressure. No treatment involving bleeding came to my notice. So far as I could ascertain they do not practise any form of surgery.